

## Council Member Calls For Probe of Alleged 311 Harassment As Colleague Calls Dead-of-Night Calls from Cops 'Inappropriate'

By Jesse Coburn | Oct 26, 2021 | 8 COMMENTS



Illustration: Martin Schapiro

A City Council member called for an investigation into harassing messages that residents said they've received after filing 311 reports about driver misconduct to the NYPD, while another Council member said he himself has received "inappropriate" calls from police after filing 311 complaints.

Council Member Ben Kallos of Manhattan called for the probe after allegations that cops have harassed 311 callers surfaced in [two recent](#) Streetsblog stories, as well as a deeper [investigation](#) into the Police Department's handling of 311 reports on illegal parking, chronically reckless driving and abandoned vehicles. People interviewed by Streetsblog — including Council Member Bob Holden of Queens — said they had received strange voicemails or phone calls in the middle of the night after filing complaints about driver misconduct to 311. Two people said they believe the voicemails they received from unidentified callers were from NYPD officers seeking to intimidate them into no longer filing such complaints. In Holden's case, the police identified themselves.

Kallos called the allegations detailed by Streetsblog "disturbing," and he asked anyone who has received such calls to contact his office by emailing [bkallos@benkallos.com](mailto:bkallos@benkallos.com).

"Nobody should be abusing any power that they have," he said. "The allegations ... must be investigated."

Holden, a Queens Council member, called the issues documented in Streetsblog's report "a serious problem" — an opinion shaped by his own experience using 311.

Holden said he received phone calls from police officers at 3 a.m. after filing a 311 complaint hours earlier.

"I think that's inappropriate," he said.



How Streetsblog covered the story last week.

Officers have also closed his 311 complaints in just a few minutes, he said, and reported in the 311 system that they had addressed issues raised when in fact they hadn't.

Holden introduced a [bill](#) in 2018 that would require city agencies unable to respond to 311 complaints to report that in the 311 system.

"I want honest reporting from not only the police but from every agency," he said. "If they didn't have enough personnel, I want to hear that. Or if it's delayed for some reason, I want to hear that. I just don't want them to make something up, which is apparently what they're doing."

Kallos was one of many elected leaders on the Council's transportation and oversight committees to express alarm about Streetsblog's report on the eve of Tuesday's joint hearing on street safety, illegal parking and 311 calls on driver misconduct. Analyzing more than 26 million 311 reports, Streetsblog found the NYPD routinely ignores notifications about illegal parking, chronically reckless driving and abandoned vehicles, fostering a culture of lawlessness on city streets that residents say is getting worse as traffic deaths [climb](#) to their highest point in years.

Streetsblog's investigation revealed:

- The NYPD now closes thousands of service requests about driver misconduct each year in under five minutes, up from only five such complaints that were closed so quickly in 2010. Former city officials said it was implausible that officers were actually investigating and resolving so many complaints in under five minutes, given it takes the NYPD more than seven minutes on average to respond to even the most critical emergencies, per city data.
- Officers rarely write tickets in response to 311 reports on driver misconduct, and they routinely dismiss driver misconduct reports as outside the police department's jurisdiction. Attorneys and former city officials said that justification is false, as such issues are clearly the police's responsibility.
- Residents who together have filed more than an estimated 1,000 driver misconduct service requests say those efforts have almost never led to the problems being addressed.
- Some officers appear especially dismissive of such complaints. In one Brooklyn precinct, 16 percent of driver misconduct reports this year have been closed in under five minutes.

Council Member Eric Dinowitz, of the Bronx, called Streetsblog's findings "very problematic," while his East Harlem and the South Bronx counterpart Diana Ayala called them "very alarming."

"Reckless driving kills people, illegal parking can cause injuries and accessibility issues, and abandoned vehicles impair quality of life for our neighborhoods," Dinowitz said in a statement. "Law enforcement must do the job they are required to do, and do it diligently."

Dinowitz called for a range of reforms to the 311 system, including enabling users to reopen cases if an agency does not respond properly and to provide immediate feedback on how their complaints were handled.

Other Council members said the story offers further proof that the city must pursue alternatives to police action to ensure drivers obey traffic and parking laws.

"The NYPD's negligence when it comes to going after traffic violations like illegal parking and reckless driving is unacceptable, but it is also not surprising," Brooklyn Council Member Antonio Reynoso said in a statement. "Streetsblog's findings underscore that the NYPD is unreliable and unequipped to handle traffic enforcement."

Reynoso, the Democratic nominee for Brooklyn borough president, called for the city to install more traffic enforcement [cameras](#) and redesign streets to reign in reckless drivers.

Kallos said the city should expand the use of cameras to ticket drivers for infractions including illegal turns, speeding and failure to yield.

“If the NYPD is not willing to do their job, then the robots can do it for them,” he said.

Council Member Carlina Rivera, in a statement, said it was “disappointing to hear of an agency or department that is not upholding their end of the bargain and addressing each 311 service request with the attention it deserves.”

The Manhattan council member continued: “We must ensure we are prioritizing active traffic enforcement to keep all New Yorkers safe.”

Manhattan Council Member Keith Powers expressed a similar perspective.

“It’s imperative that the city is responding appropriately to 311 calls and taking them seriously,” he said in a statement. “We have to ensure that all agencies are working together towards that goal.”

Mayor de Blasio and Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams, the likely next mayor, did not respond to requests for comment. The NYPD has not responded to multiple requests for comment.

Filed Under: 311, Ben Kallos, City Council, NYPD, Robert Holden, Streetsblog Gets Action

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**postingembassy**


 a year ago

"inappropriate" searing words from councilor holden! looks like this will be fixed immediately!

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**ENY**


 a year ago

"Inappropriate" is a weird way for the council members to spell "illegal."

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**Vooch**

 a year ago

"If the NYPD is not willing to do their job, then the robots can do it for them,"


Highly Trained and valuable Peace Officers are better deployed to spend their precious time preventing violent crimes.

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**timnyc**

→ Vooch


 a year ago

Problem is they don't do that either. Defund!

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**LiberalsAreBetter** → timnyc

 a year ago

We really needed a candidate who defunds the police, not is the police.

I'm so disappointed that Maya Wiley didnt win.


I still hope Adams is harder on the NYPD rather than the status quo

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**kevd**

→ LiberalsAreBetter

 a year ago


he was when he was in the NYPD....  
so, maybe?

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**Joe R.**

→ kevd

 a year ago

Sort of like the old adage only Nixon could go to China. Adams might be the only one who can get real NYPD reform. As an ex-cop, he'll have clout with the NYPD that deBlasio sorely lacked.

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"Whether [such calls are] coming from a city employee or someplace else, it's not good," the mayor said when asked about the alleged harassment. "What we need to know is what happened in those cases."



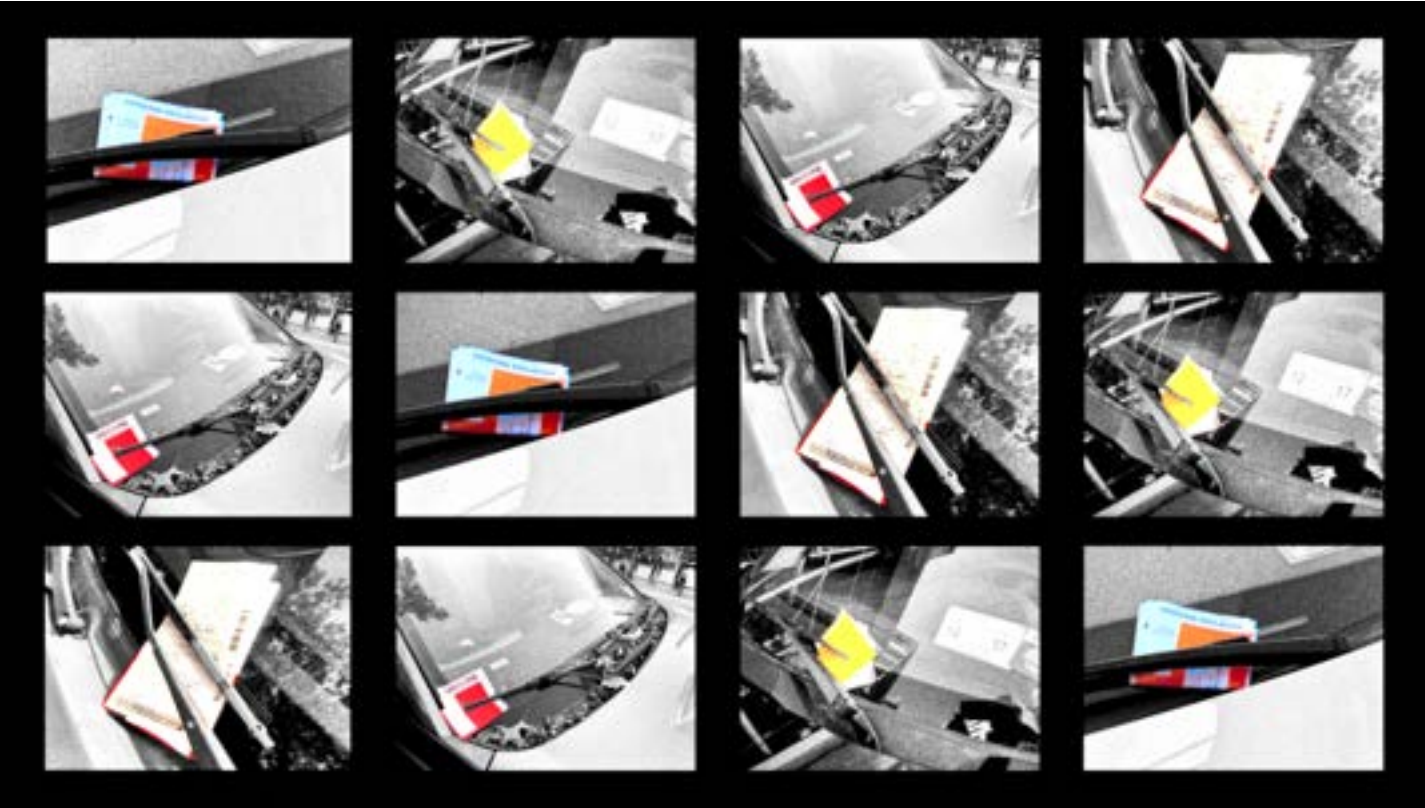
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By Jesse Coburn | Aug 29, 2022

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